Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

INDEX

INTERVAC GETS GREEN LIGHT WITH FUNDING INJECTION 07-15-67

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND SEEKING LETTERS OF INTENT 07-15-68

OUTREACH PROJECT ATTRACTING PRODUCERS TO SAKATCHEWAN 07-15-69

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR FUNDING THROUGH CARDS PROGRAM 07-15-70

FOR SASKATOON GROWERS, PROPER PRUNING MEANS BEST BUSHES 07-15-71

Farm and Food Report is produced weekly by Zapwell Communications Group for Communications Branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
Contact: Caroline Jacobs
101-3085 Albert Street, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4S 0B1
Telephone: (306) 787-5160, Fax: (306) 787-0216
Internet Page: http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca

2007-02963/

Saskatchewan
Agriculture
and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-15-67
Week of April 9, 2007

INTERVAC GETS GREEN LIGHT WITH FUNDING INJECTION

A $24.7 million injection from the provincial government means the final piece of the puzzle is now in place for the University of Saskatchewan's International Vaccine Centre, or InterVac, to move forward.

"It was the final stage of funding required to give the construction phase of the project a go," said Paul Hodgson, the Associate Director of Business Development for the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), which is the primary collaborator in InterVac.

"For the future of InterVac, that amount of funding means it will actually go ahead. So it was absolutely ideal, and it's what we needed to construct the facility."

The total infrastructure cost for the project is estimated to be around $110 million.

InterVac is a state-of-the-art research and development centre that will develop vaccines to protect people and animals from the threat of emerging or persistent diseases such as avian influenza or tuberculosis. It will be the first Level 3 biosafety facility in Western Canada dealing with both human and large animal diseases.

"The biosafety rating refers to a different level of containment and security, because you don't want to put your food supply at risk or anything like that," explained Hodgson. "So our Level 3 rating means the facility will be extremely secure. We would potentially be able to look at things like HIV, for example, which is considered a Level 3 pathogen."

What sets InterVac apart from similar facilities is its ability to incorporate large animals into its vaccine research and development. "We have the ability to work with agricultural pathogens or disease-causing organisms, but we can work with human pathogens to see if we have a model that is appropriate," he said.

"So it's important for the agricultural sector, and it's important for the medical sector. This facility, and our work here, will be unique in the world."

(more)

Hodgon noted that a lot of medical research used to be done on mice and rats. This posed some challenges, since discoveries made in mice and rats don't always translate well into human health due to the vastly different physiologies, immune systems, living environments and diets between the two species. Nor do studies on rodents necessarily work well for larger animals like cattle and swine.

"As you move up the species chain into larger animals, the actual research becomes a bit more applicable to human diseases," he said, noting that several more recent medical breakthroughs for people have been made using pigs for research.

In addition, illnesses like avian influenza are typical of many emerging diseases, in that they are directly linked to animals, but are now affecting human beings. Hodgson says this involves a field of research for which InterVac is perfectly positioned.

But the tremendous potential the facility holds is also relevant to the average agricultural producer. Hodgson emphasizes that the InterVac team's relationship with farmers is always foremost in their minds.

"Ultimately, we hope InterVac is going to provide a competitive advantage for the Canadian agricultural industry, to reduce the farmer's cost of production by developing vaccines of agricultural importance," he said.

"So we're looking at diseases of animals that are relevant in this day and age, and how our research can help combat them. Ultimately, we're trying to help the producers reduce their costs and the mortality rates of their animals, and therefore increase their profits."

Construction on the InterVac facility is expected to start this year. It is projected that the very detailed process of ensuring it meets Canadian Food Inspection Agency standards will take close to three years.

When all is said and done, Hodgson says Saskatchewan's position as a global leader in infectious disease research, and biosecurity and research innovation will only be strengthened.

"InterVac, combined with VIDO and other institutes at the university like the Canadian Light Source Synchrotron, put us squarely in the forefront in these areas."

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Paul Hodgson, Associate Director, Business Development
Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization
Phone: (306) 966-1523
E-mail: paul.hodgson@usask.ca

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-15-68
Week of April 9, 2007

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND SEEKING LETTERS OF INTENT

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) is currently seeking letters of intent from those interested in obtaining research funding under the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF).

The projects for this year may be just a twinkle in the eye of a researcher – but if past results are any indication, the research supported by the ADF will have a profound impact on the Saskatchewan agricultural industry.

"The Agriculture Development Fund provides project funding for researchers to address issues of importance to the agriculture industry," said SAF Manager of Research and Development Bill Greuel.

"The ADF has tried over the past 20 years to add value to agriculture. We do that by providing funding to researchers who are looking at everything from variety development or animal genetics to value-added processing and new bio-products."

Greuel says the fund supports a broad spectrum of projects.

"We try to target research that goes from variety development, at the very root of agricultural innovation in the province, through to the development of innovative new products and processes that can develop new products, make advancements in bio-energy, and create new ways to add value to agriculture," he said.

Many initiatives have been funded over the years, but the driving force has always been improving the bottom line for the agricultural industry.

"We look at what can increase returns to a producer. That might be through decreased production risks, new methods of crop production, or better varieties. We look at higher value for processors. That might involve new products developed from agricultural commodities. We also look at the benefits to consumers of the agricultural commodities we produce here in Saskatchewan," Greuel stated.

"So we are trying to increase the value of the agricultural industry at all levels, from producers to processors to consumers."

(more)

That impact can be quantified. Greuel noted that a number of studies have looked at the economic return of agricultural research. A recent report focusing on funding for variety development found that every dollar invested in the area returned $3.43 in value back to the industry.

The ADF is open to both public and private research firms. "We fund work at the U of S, the U of R, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, the Prairie Swine Centre, and private companies," Greuel said. "We've got research going on with just about anybody who can add value to the industry."

The fund will consider proposals related to any aspect of agricultural production, but specific emphasis is being placed on research which will lead to:

- improved food quality and safety;
- new and innovative food and other bioproducts and bioprocessing technologies;
- optimized livestock feeding systems;
- increased competitiveness in livestock production;
- decreased agricultural production risks;
- new crop varieties to meet market demand and consumer preferences; and
- integrated and comprehensive farming systems and practices that enhance or maintain the agro-ecosystem's capacity and the integrity of the provincial land and soil resource.

ADF letters of intent will be accepted until April 15. Successful applicants will then be asked to submit a full proposal before September 1.

Letter of intent forms are available online at www.arb.gov.sk.ca, or through the links on the SAF website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca.

Applicants are asked to follow the online instructions. If problems or questions arise, please call (306) 787-5929, or e-mail ARBonline@agr.gov.sk.ca.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Bill Greuel, Manager of Research and Development
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
Phone: (306) 787-9768
E-mail: wgreuel@agr.gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan
Agriculture
and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-15-69
Week of April 9, 2007

OUTREACH PROJECT ATTRACTING PRODUCERS TO SASKATCHEWAN

What started out as coffee shop talk grew into a co-ordinated – and rather successful – effort to sell farm families from outside the province on the benefits of relocating to east central Saskatchewan.

The innovative "Last Cattle Frontier" (LCF) project recently celebrated its fifth anniversary of holding seminars and conducting presentations on the merits of farming in the province.

Naomi Paley, a livestock development specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF), remembers well the early beginnings of the initiative back in 2002.

"The initial plan of action was to attract Alberta ranchers to east central Saskatchewan," she said. "It all began with a small group of individuals traveling in vans to Red Deer to conduct a seminar for cattle producers in the area."

Paley says that representatives of SAF, Ducks Unlimited, local rural municipalities and area farmers comprised the original group that headed west, although there was a great deal of support for the concept back home.

Over the years, the LCF has conducted 11 seminars and made presentations to over 200 producers. The outreach is geared toward cattle producers thinking of expanding or relocating their operations. Its goal is to promote the benefits of beef farming in east central Saskatchewan, to leave all attendees with good information, and to establish contacts for them throughout the region.

"In many areas of Alberta and other jurisdictions, there's a lack of available land, and what is available can be rather costly. Some regions have also struggled through some pretty dry years that have really impacted area ranchers," Paley said.

"We want to impress on them that they can find good land that is well-suited to cattle production in east central Saskatchewan, and it's probably quite reasonably priced compared to what they're used to."

An important part of the outreach is a testimonial by local producers who moved to Saskatchewan from elsewhere. They provide an overview of their experiences relocating to the east central region, enabling those who are contemplating such a move to hear from others who have successfully made the transition.

(more)

The area has not only attracted Alberta cattle producers but also producers from British Columbia and even the United Kingdom. "When it comes to marketing Saskatchewan beyond the borders of Alberta, word-of-mouth has been one of our best tools," said Paley. "When producers come looking for land on which to relocate their ranching operations, Saskatchewan is one of the first places they look. We've had producers from all over Western Canada come through here, many of them saying 'We've always heard about Saskatchewan, so we've come to check it out.'"

Paley says that attendance at the seminars ranges from "first time lookers" to ranchers who have already been checking into the potential of moving or establishing their livestock operations in Saskatchewan. The audiences have consisted of people of all ages – families with young children, couples ready to retire, and everyone in between.

"The families attending these seminars may not make a decision to move right then and there, but the information gets delivered and the seed is planted," she noted.

While it's impossible to attribute all the positive activity to the LCF project, a recent phone survey of rural municipalities in the east central region showed that, over the past seven years, approximately 150 farm families have moved into the area from out of province. Most of these families have been younger farmers, many with young children, who have delivered a welcome boost to the region in terms of increasing the rural population and economy, as well as bringing in new ideas and vitality.

"The LCF project tries to make this incredible decision and transition as easy as possible for farm families by providing them soil maps, aerial photography, pasture assessments, information on schools, hospitals and recreation, and anything else they might require," Paley stated.

The key to it all, she says, is having a lot of supportive partners involved in the project. Today, the LCF initiative has grown to encompass four Regional Economic Development Authorities, SAF, Ducks Unlimited, the City of Yorkton, and the City of Melville as full project partners.

Numerous other businesses and agencies from all across the region have contributed tremendous financial and marketing support. Real estate companies, the media, local producers, area residents and municipalities have been key allies.

"I think anyone associated with the initiative would tell you that its success has been because of the partners involved and their willingness to share and think from a regional perspective instead of an individual one," Paley said. "It's also due to the open-mindedness and big picture view of the benefits that a project like this can have."

Anyone interested in learning more about the Last Cattle Frontier initiative can visit the project's website at www.lastcattlefrontier.com or call 1-866-800-2676.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Naomi Paley, Livestock Development Specialist
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
Phone: (306) 786-1686
E-mail: npaley@agr.gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan
Agriculture
and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-15-70
Week of April 9, 2007

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR FUNDING THROUGH CARDS PROGRAM

Groups seeking funding from the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development in Saskatchewan (CARDS) program have until April 23 to submit their applications to the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development (SCCD).

The CARDS program is an initiative to foster the increased long-term growth, employment and competitiveness of Canada's agricultural and agri-food industry. The program is funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and administered in Saskatchewan by the SCCD.

The organization's Executive Director Laurie Dmytryshyn says that, while the program is winding up, some money remains available for new applicants.

"A few of our completed projects are coming in below budget," Dmytryshyn said. "Because of this under-spending, we now have residual funds available for new project applications."

Since 1995, the CARDS program has provided over $20 million to more than 900 projects in Saskatchewan, assisting them in leveraging over $46 million in total funding. The program includes five areas: Industry and Rural Resource Development, Business Development Activities, Capital Equipment Purchases, Value-Added Development, and Environmental Stewardship.

Dmytryshyn says the Industry and Rural Resource Development area was designed to enhance and strengthen the agriculture and agri-food sector through funding for resource development.

"We funded quite a few conferences, workshops, and information packages," she said. "An excellent example of a project assisted under this category is the partial CARDS funding provided for the display at the Pork Interpretive Centre."

The program has different criteria targeted to for-profit and non-profit projects.

"If it's a for-profit organization, we'll provide a grant in the amount of 50 per cent of the eligible cash costs," Dmytryshyn said. "If it's a non-profit organization, we can fund up to 70 per cent. This is where a lot of our commodity associations or food processing groups might fit."

(more)

Another very active area has been Business Development Activities.

"This program area was designed to develop, commercialize, and market new value-added agricultural products and processes in the province," Dmytryshyn stated. "It will fund market assessments and development, feasibility studies, business plans, prototype development and related activities."

Dmytryshyn notes that projects applying in the Capital Equipment Purchase category must involve the adoption of technology that is new to the province. An applicant may receive up to 10 per cent of the purchase cost for the new equipment.

Projects in the Value-Added Development category tend to be initiatives launched by industry associations. "The intent of this category is to assist industry in expanding value-added initiatives in processing, and marketing," she said.

The final category, Environmental Stewardship, aims to increase understanding and support the development of environmentally friendly practices.

While this will be the final round of funding under CARDS, SCCD continues to operate the CARDS program's successor, the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan (ACAAFS) initiative. The next deadline for ACAAFS applications is April 16. Details on both programs, along with application forms, are available at www.sccd.sk.ca.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Laurie Dmytryshyn, Executive Director
Saskatchewan Council for Community Development
Phone: (306) 975-6849
E-mail: dmytryshynl@sccd.sk.ca
Website: www.sccd.sk.ca

Saskatchewan
Agriculture
and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-15-71
Week of April 9, 2007

FOR SASKATOON GROWERS, PROPER PRUNING MEANS BEST BUSHES

Saskatoon growers, from the casual backyard gardener to the commercial orchard operator, will want to attend the upcoming saskatoon pruning workshop organized by the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association (SFGA).

The workshop will take place on April 23 at 1:30 p.m. It is being held at Prairie Dome Strawberries and Saskatoons, located 10 kilometres south of Yorkton on Highway #9.

Tonia Vermette, the owner and operator of Prairie Dome, says the seminar will offer a lot of good information to growers. "Pruning techniques are very important in a sasktoon crop, because saskatoons want to be a tree, they don't want to be a shrub. You have to encourage them otherwise, or else when they get to be about 10 years old, you won't be able to reach the berries from the ground anymore," she said.

"Saskatoons only bear on one-year-old wood, and they just grow from the tip. As a result, you want many stems coming from the ground, and you want to keep the plants rejuvenating so that a nice shrub forms and stays that way for 30 years."

The workshop is being conducted by Clarence Peters, a provincial specialist for fruit crops with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF). "Clarence is the saskatoon specialist in the province," Vermette noted. "He's done a lot of research into pruning techniques that make the bushes grow like you want them to."

Proper pruning of saskatoons will deliver considerable benefits for both large and small growers. For one, it protects the bushes from disease and ensures that infected branches are correctly removed to prevent the disease from spreading.

Pruning also maximizes and stabilizes yields from year to year. "Saskatoons are a biennial crop. You tend to have a really big crop one year, and then a fairly small one the next year," Vermette said.

"Of course, a lot depends on bloom and weather and pollination, too, but pruning encourages a stable amount of fruit every year. You're going to try to get the bush to do what you want it to, and that is to produce more consistently."

(more)

It can also make the saskatoons more suitable to harvesting with a mechanical harvester, a device with long metal fingers that protrude into the bushes to shake the berries free.

"Proper pruning will ensure the bushes are shaped so that there's as little damage as possible to the plant during this process," Vermette stated.

Registration for the afternoon-long session is $25 per operation, meaning that the single fee will cover multiple delegates wishing to attend from the same farm. Payments can be made at the door.

All registration fees collected from the workshop will be used by the SFGA to fund research and other projects being undertaken to enhance the development of saskatoons and other prairie fruits.

To register or obtain more information on the session, please contact Prairie Dome Strawberries and Saskatoons at (306) 782-7297, visit the operation's website at www.prairiedome.com, or visit the SFGA website at www.saskfruit.com.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Tonia Vermette
Prairie Dome Strawberries and Saskatoons
Phone: (306) 782-7297
Website: www.prairiedome.com